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ABSTRACT

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' OSAP High Risk Youth Demonstration Program seeks to prevent substance abuse through experiences offered in an after-school program. In 1990-91 the program served 710 students in grades K-8 in 7 of the reservation's 8 schools, each of which tailors the program to its own needs. Five components were common to all participating schools: tutoring on homework, drug education, recreation, snacks, and cultural activities. Offered 4 days per week, the program also served an after-school childcare function. An external evaluator reviewed program records pertaining to student participation, activities, personnel, and cost accounting; verified pretest-posttest evaluation data; and interviewed personnel and students during program site visits. Field notes from site visits revealed that three schools had programs that showed great success in implementation and operation, while the other four schools had effective programs that fell just short of the desired level of implementation. Program strengths included strong principals who supported staff during program development, energetic lead-teachers who coordinated efforts and met deadlines, and staff who enjoyed seeing students enjoy school. Problems at some schools included enrollments that were too large, high staff turnover, and too much concern by some staff over discipline and maintaining a clean school. Positive outcomes included very few cases of substance abuse among children, less gang activity, expressions of "good school attitudes," and community approval. (SV)

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

OSAP HIGH RISK YOUTH DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

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External Evaluation of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' OSAP High Risk Youth Demonstration Program

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November 13, 1991

Introduction

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' OSAP High Risk Youth Demonstration Program is directed toward the prevention of substance abuse through experiences offered in an after-school program. The program is implemented in seven of the eight reservation schools. Much of the implementation has been left up to each individual participating school, resulting in programs tailored to the school's needs and differences in program design across schools.

The program was originally designed to serve an estimated group of 610 kindergarten through eighth grade students. The program, however, met many needs and was participated in by more than 710 students. The general overall structure of the program included five components common to all participating schools. These components included: tutoring on homework; drug education; recreation; snacks; and cultural activities. All were held after school four days per week, making the program serve a "latch-key" function liked by many parents. Some students expressed the idea that the program was "fun." Others benefited from the tutoring in "homework." Still others enjoyed the program because of the recreation and cultural activities. Hence, the program can be described as having a responsive model that is based on the rationale that students are reached if time is spent with them and if they are offered interesting and pleasant experiences.

External Evaluator Responsibilities and Methodology

Generally, the responsibility of the external evaluator includes the verification of the quality control and operations components, the advisory oversight of the internal evaluation, and the deliverer of a new or "outsider" point of view with regard to the project. This external evaluation to the OSAP "after-school" program included the following:

1. An overview of my review of records and activities of the program;
2. A verification of the collection of the evaluation data which are at Mississippi State for analysis;
3. A commentary on my prior two visits;
4. A report of my field visits to each school;
5. A summary of results of my investigations;
6. A report on the strengths and weaknesses of the program; and
7. My recommendations for future management action.

The methods used in this external evaluation are direct and straight forward. The method used for review of records and activities of the program and for the verification of the

collection of the evaluation data involved first a review of each instrument used to collect the information and then review of the method through which the information was stored. The acknowledgment of two prior meetings and the work accomplished in them was simple recall and program records. The method used in the field visits to each school was ethnographic interviews and the summary of results of my investigations was simply bringing together my field notes and review summaries. From these methods follows the report on the strengths and weaknesses of the program; and the rendering of recommendations. The external evaluation includes two sections: accountability and implementation.

Accountability

Records review. The external evaluator reviewed the records kept pertaining to program operation. These records included a program participation application form for students; records of student attendance; records of student discipline referrals; staff rosters, menus of snacks; activity outlines collected weekly from the teachers in the schools; and student survey information which provided additional demographics to the application form. An audit trail has been developed for cost accounting.

Basic operations information including the activity outlines and the attendance information are in excellent shape. There appears to be some minor turnover of staff late in the academic year. Documentation of cause of resignation was collected and is on file. Personnel papers were completed for all new staff. Toward the end of the school, it has been discovered that in two schools substitutions were being made in the snacks. This malfunction is now being addressed by the project management.

Verification of the Evaluation Data. This external evaluator was able to review the pretest data when it was in tribal hands. Due to the necessity of having to switch internal evaluators, I have not been able to review summaries of the posttest data. I know that it has been collected and is now in the hands of Mississippi State Bureau of Educational Research which is being contracted to handle the internal evaluation and analyze the data. It is my understanding that there is a minor holdup at the Federal Level that has delayed the completion of the contract and the new internal evaluator will start analysis as soon as the Federal snag is cleared.

Verification of Prior Visits. The first visit of the external evaluator was spent helping the project administration to work out problems with the implementation of the Moreno Sociogram Instrument. This hurdle was cleared and the sociogram offers the potential of being very helpful in tapping the informal, in-school leadership. The second visit was spent on smoothing the administration of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, selecting a mode of analysis for it, and discussing the potential of changing

self-concept measures. On both trips the evaluator worked with other programs in addition to the service to this program.

Implementation

As part of the summative external evaluation for the program year 1990-1991, visits were made to each school and school personnel and after-school program personnel were interviewed. In some schools classes were observed and children were briefly interviewed. In all schools the principal was interviewed. In five schools the lead teacher was interviewed. All interviews were direct, pressure-free data collection. Prior to analysis the field notes from the interviews are reported by school.

Field Notes from School Visits

Standing Pine - I talked to the principal, two aides and two teachers concerning the program. The program involves 52 children divided into four groups. The principal reports that the program is meeting a need in the community. All four group leaders (the two aides and the two teachers) were extremely positive about the program. All five meet as a group. Teachers appeared a little reluctant to talk until they had to answer a couple opener questions. The four teachers rated the program a-, a, a, and a. Most outstanding accomplishments of the program are: the beadwork of the students, student participation in dances and the opportunity for the teachers to get the students started right with their homework. The drug-free instruction is understood and believed effective. Drug problems are nearly non-existent with the children and about 50% of the families have alcohol problems. Problems include: for two months in the winter some children arrive home by bus after dark (so far no problems from this and it is thought to be the lessor of two evils, children arriving home without a supervisor present), craftsmen have to travel so far to the school that they want mileage paid, teachers have difficulty in obtaining "the right beads" (can not be purchased in the local area and teachers missed the purchasing opportunity) and teachers want feedback from tests and sociogram.

Red Water - I talked first to the principal and then talked to three aides and one teacher while students were doing a cultural dance. The program has between 58-60 students, two teachers and three aides. The outstanding characteristics of the program were: cultural dancing and beadwork. It appears that the principal has not been supportive of th after school program during the school year. In fact, the principal stated that she felt that the program confused the children and they could not distinguish the program from regular school. She felt that lack of discipline in the program each day was carrying over to the next morning (children will fight in after school program and then open up hostilities again in the morning). Teacher and aides all believe that the program has been a success, especially with cultural instruction. Problems noted by the teacher included: homework should be done at home (the homework part simply turns into more school work); the program needs more community support and

parent participation (have trouble getting parents to spend their time at the time that the program is in operation); need beads and more time to complete teaching beadwork; need boards for instruction on making "God's Eye" craft; and there is a problem the way that the children enter the single room (lunchroom). Teachers simply turn their students out and the students arrive at the program at different times. Although drug-prevention instruction is provided, they feel that drinking among parents may be on the upswing. No substance abuse among the children, 60 to 65% parents have alcohol problems.

Conehatta - I talked to the principal, the lead-teacher and four aides. The outstanding achievements of the program was that it provided the students with another hour and half of positive reinforcement and provided them with an opportunity to learn traditions of the culture. The program includes 112 students, 4 teachers and 6 aides. The program is really needed because most of the parents work. The principal felt that the two months of dark to and from school needed to be studied. He felt that the program put pressure on the school transportation system. He was unaware that the program contributed to paying for the school transportation required by the program. He also pointed out that the program caused him to have to have two faculty meetings - one at 2:00 p.m. for the program teachers and one at 3:30 p.m. for the other teachers. The aides participating felt that the program needed: more beads (invoicing took too long and they did not know what to anticipate as program needs); planned activities that permit the children to be outside; and more structure to what happens in the program. The lead teacher said that the program needs: a one hour per week planning time, feedback on the sociogram and more program guidance. Tobacco use is a major problem with a majority of the older students. Alcohol abuse in 70-75% of the homes. They need a list of resource people and some help in the substance abuse instruction. They feel that the homework tutoring is "good" and is "working", but they need better coordination on assignments.

Tucker - I talked with the principal, the lead-teacher, two aides and one teacher not involved in the after school program. The program has three teachers, three aides and about 110 students. The principal sees as strengths of the program the following: students have become more involved with cultural activities; the tutoring has helped get students doing homework on a more consistent basis; and the program has helped many parents by serving a latch key function. Problems include: the principal has had to put in some overtime for which she did not receive pay. There have been no discipline problems associated with the program. The lead-teacher believed the accomplishments of the program to include the following: the students benefit from the physical exercise, social interaction and cultural activities. During the year in the after school program the students have designed t-shirts, done beadwork, received instruction on the losses due to drug abuse and developed homework habits. The students have fun and the teachers switch program parts to keep the children's interest. The teacher rates the program at Tucker

as a B. This is because she kept a group as lead-teacher for the first half of the year. In the second half of the year the lead-teacher floated and stimulated the groups. This was a better arrangement. She saw one major problem: the lead-teacher has no authority or power with staff or students. The two aides thought the program to be "good" because culture is being taught and the children and parents like it. The problem that they see is the lack of materials to make cultural artifacts. The other teacher wished for more tutoring time for the older children and science to be taught in the program. The program did not have a bead shortage. The lead-teacher went to Jackson to purchase Tucker's.

Bogue Chitto - I talked to the principal, two teachers and two aides. The lead-teacher was not available. The principal has tried to blend the activities of the after school program with the SAVE THE CHILD program and with local music instruction (choir, piano and guitar). The program has served a valuable latch key function and the homework part has served to increase achievement. The after school program has four teacher positions filled by five teachers and five aides. The program serves 110 children. The program has caused no discipline problems but has made the principal use the activity for faculty meetings and has made each meeting require two sessions. The principal feels that the program at Bogue Chitto needs one additional teacher and additional resource money. The two teachers rate the program as a B+. Both teachers praised the program in several ways. The program offers an opportunity for the children to have fun at school, to study their culture and to learn study habits by starting their homework. The aides enjoy teaching the physical activities and the cultural activities. They wish to be allowed to work the same number of hours as the teachers. Both aide and teacher meet with rather large subgroups (four).

Choctaw Central, grades 7 & 8 - I talked with the assistant principal and the lead-teacher. The assistant principal's reaction to the program was "Great Program". He felt that the key product of the program was the tutoring and the help with homework. The other beneficial products were the latch key function served to working parents and the provision of exercise and physical education to the students. The program includes three teachers, two aides and 44 children. He would like to see the funding for materials increased and he would like to increase the time spent tutoring. There are two regular program groups and one group that is all study hall by parent request. The lead-teacher enjoyed the program and will do it again. He rates the program an A and reports that the students really like it. He believes that the program is good because of the teaching of culture and tutoring.

Pearl River - I talked to the principal,one staff member and the lead-teacher. The program can be credited with the following achievements: it reinforces homework, it conveys the drug education message, it provides an opportunity for the students to do some needed physical education, and it sets the opportunity for the children to socialize. The program involves seven

teachers, seven aides, and 261 children arranged in six groups. The lead-teacher floats and organizes. The program negatives include: staff fatigue due to oversubscription, facility deterioration, lack of control and supervision by program administration, and poor quality snacks. It is suspected that snacks are leftovers, but they should not be. The lead-teacher reported difficulty in keeping staff. Some have reduced their time in half, putting pressure on him to keep the needed number of staff. With the size of the program someone is needed to answer the telephone. The floating method works better for the lead-teacher. He gave the program a B.

Director of Schools - "Program is meeting a tremendous need. This is shown by the overwhelming participation. The program should be expanded."

Summary of Results. In three of the seven schools the program appears to be implemented in "dream-like" fidelity to the model described in the funding proposal. Standing Pine, Tucker and Bogue Chitto appear to be running as proposed. Three keys appear instrumental to this success in implementation and operation. They are: a strong principal who is able to display confidence in the staff during the development phases; an energetic lead-teacher who coordinates efforts, meets deadlines and communicates; and staff that enjoy seeing students enjoy school, which could be a theme of the program. In all three of these schools there is strong evidence that the program is working. Such evidence includes: very few cases of substance abuse among the children, less gang activities and expressions of "good school attitudes."

In spite of the fact the "program personnel" report that older students are more difficult as program participants, Choctaw Central Middle School has an effective program. This appears to be attributable to the staff wanting the program to work and to the enthusiasm of the principal.

Pearl River, Conehatta and Red Water are schools that appear to have effective programs that just fall short of the desirable level of implementation. Conehatta's program appears to be held back (probably not to the degree that the children are aware of the delay) by the degree to which the school is isolated, by a break down in communications and by the scarcity of time that the lead-teacher purports to have. Pearl River's problems are most likely noticed by the students. They are attributable to: a matter of size (too many signed up); over concern with protecting the school plant; staff turn-over; and variance away from the model through substitution (poor snacks). This plant is new and beautiful and subjects its inhabitants to the new car phenomenon. In Red Water it appears that there is an over concern with discipline, maintenance of a clean school plant, and with homework. Some students in Pearl River and Red Water do not appear to enjoy the program.

Overall, one would have to say that the program is generally effective. Impact can be viewed as an absence of problems with students who are not supervised every afternoon. The program must go on and the directors must seek to fill an increased need with a decreased budget. Lead teachers appear to serve as drive shafts for this effectiveness. Late or no purchasing appears to be attributable to the lead-teacher and the time that he/she spends on the program.

Community acceptance of the program appeared early. The maintenance of the 14% over subscription and the little loss in attendance attest to the quality of the program. The program appears to be at the appropriate level for prevention.

Strengths and Weaknesses. It appears clear from the field notes that the programs within each school have the strength of a good design shell. The common components of: tutoring on homework; drug education; recreation; snacks; and cultural activities are clearly the strengths of the programs. By making students feel closer to their culture, by having them enjoy school and by helping them with their homework, a true program of prevention is operative. Individualized school level design appears to be both a strength and a weakness. By allowing each school to establish its own tailoring of the program, one gets a program that is highly effective at meeting its own needs, but sacrifice at the level of uniformity is made. In some schools the staff (especially the lead-teacher) are a strength. Still, in others the staff or lack of it and the absence of principal support are weaknesses. One must be careful not to allow the program to focus too much on homework or care of the facility or it will become more of the same rather than a preventive measure.

The great need for the program and the general applicability of it to local social problems is worth pursuit. The program affords the opportunity for people to work together.

Recommendations

1. I heartily recommend that the program continue and that word of its success leak out to the rest of the world.

2. I recommend that more clarity and wisdom be placed in the selection of the lead-teacher. As this is done well, so comes success of the program.

3. Central purchasing should be used to do away with the problem that some schools do not take advantage of opportunity. Make certain that there are enough beads.

4. Some insertion of teacher planning time should be made.

5. There seems to be different levels at which programs work with homework and those that require students to do all of their homework do not work as well as those which make certain that

students can do their homework. Emphasize the latter and discourage the former.

6. Promote the "orderly fun" concept in the schools, no prevention will occur if the students do not like the program.

7. The program administration should sponsor a "parent" day to show off what the students have done after-school. A huge turn out may send the message to school administration that the program is an essential element on the reservation.